

# The Classical Outlook

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## IS THE ABLATIVE ABSOLUTE?

BY ROBERT O. FINK

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**A**LMOST EVERYONE has probably heard one or another version of the story of the tycoon whose subordinate tacitly corrected "which we have been waiting for" to "for which we have been waiting." The tycoon's response was an acrid little note: "This is the kind of officiousness up with which I will not put."

The connection between this story and the present note, with its purposely absurd title, is that both illustrate the almost inescapable tendency in dealing with language (especially in teaching it) to ignore what the language actually *does* in favor of some rule which we have been taught and which we like to apply mechanically. The tycoon nearly punctured the foolish myth that a preposition is a poor thing to end a sentence with; and it is my hope here to call attention to similar opportunities in the field of Latin, using the so-called ablative absolute as a specific example.

First let me quote reverend authority. Bennett (*Latin Grammar*, revised ed., 1908, sec. 227) declares roundly: "The Ablative Absolute is grammatically independent of the rest of the sentence. In its commonest form it consists of a noun or pronoun limited by a participle." Then (sec. 227, 1): "Instead of a participle we often find an adjective or noun." Allen and Greenough (*New Latin Grammar*, revised 1903, sec. 419) state: "A noun or pronoun, with a participle in agreement, may be put in the Ablative to define the *time* or *circumstances* of an action. This construction is called the Ablative Absolute. . . . Note—The Ablative Absolute is an *adverbial modifier* of the predicate. It is, however, not grammatically dependent on any word in the sentence: hence its name *absolute* (absolutus, i.e. *free* or *unconnected*)," and under 419 a: "An adjective, or a second noun, may take the place of the participle in the Ablative Absolute construction." Textbooks in general follow the same pattern. Harrington and McDuffee (*Third-Year Latin*, 1929, p. 488, sec. 29) say: "The ablative of a noun or pronoun with a participle or an adjective in agreement may be grammatically independent of the

## ST. LUKE I, 26-33; 38 (VULGATE VERSION)

**I**N MENSE autem sexto, missus est angelus Gabriel a Deo in civitatem Galilaeae, cui nomen Nazareth, ad virginem desponsatam viro cui nomen erat Joseph, de domo David, et nomen virginis Maria. Et ingressus angelus ad eam, dixit: "Ave, gratia plena; Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus." Quae cum audisset, turbata est in sermone eius, et cogitabat qualis esset ista salutatio. Et ait angelus ei: "Ne timeas, Maria; invenisti enim gratiam apud Deum. Ecce concipies in utero, et paries filium, et vocabis nomen eius Jesum. Hic erit magnus, et Filius Altissimi vocabitur, et dabit illi Dominus Deus sedem David patris eius. Et regnabit in domo Jacob in aeternum, et regni eius non erit finis." . . . Dixit autem Maria: "Ecce ancilla Domini. Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." Et discessit ab illa angelus.

rest of the sentence, and used to express time, cause, condition, concession, or some other circumstance of an action. A noun may take the place of the participle or adjective." In Scott, Horn, and Gummere (*Using Latin I*, 1948, pp. 234-5) we find: "A phrase consisting of a noun or pronoun and a participle is sometimes used in a sentence without being closely connected with any other word in the sentence. . . . The case which is used in Latin for such independent constructions is the ablative. . . . This use of the ablative is called the ablative absolute—the word 'absolute' here meaning virtually 'independent.' . . . Often an adjective or another noun is used instead of a participle as the second part of an ablative absolute." The last two are high-school texts; but those that I know which are intended for use in college do no better.

The force of unexamined tradition, it seems to me, is evident in all of these statements, to the great confusion and injury of the student. My objections are twofold: (1) that everyone seems obsessed with the feeling that the term "absolute" has to be explained in some way, and (2) that everyone states that a participle

is regularly a component of this construction.

Consider first the attempts to explain the term "absolute." The very fact that the authors try to explain it betrays a certain uneasiness on their part, for no one seems to worry about the etymological meanings of such terms as "subjunctive," "accusative," and "supine," which might well puzzle a beginner if he thought of them literally. And the explanations are, to be frank about it, senseless. There is no meaning whatever in the statement that the ablative absolute is "grammatically independent" of the rest of the sentence, and only a little in saying that it is "not grammatically dependent on any word" in the sentence. If this seems like strong language, let us consider further. "Dependent on a word in the sentence" conceivably means such a situation as the dative with *proximus* or the ablative with *uti*, where one may say with at least some justification that the particular case would not be used except for the presence of a particular word. But such an approach leaves out nine-tenths of syntax. Surely no one would argue that a nominative is used *because* of the presence of a verb in the sentence, or that the genitive of the possessor is put into that case *because* of the word it modifies. In these instances it is obvious, and in all instances it is true, that a particular inflectional form is used to indicate a *particular relationship of ideas* and for no other reason. The nominative form is employed to show that the person or thing designated by that word is the subject of the verb; the genitive, that the person or thing designated possesses something, or to express some other idea conveyed by the genitive. The fact that most forms have multiple uses does not alter the basic fact that the forms convey relationships.

But as for "grammatically independent of the rest of the sentence," it is difficult even to guess at a possible meaning. If it means that the case is not determined by other elements in the sentence, that idea has just been shown to be pointless. If it means that the ablative absolute phrase could be omitted without destroying the syntax of the rest of the sentence, that is true also of all modifiers, such as adjectives and adverbs, of most subordinate clauses, of the accusative of duration of time, the

dative of reference, the genitives of possession and value, the genitive and ablative of description, the ablatives of means, time when, cause, and specification, and probably of other constructions. If it means that the ablative absolute could be omitted without materially altering the meaning of the sentence, the same remarks apply, with the additional observation that "materially" is a loose and subjective term and that we ought to leave to the author to decide what is material to a given sentence and what is not.

It appears, then, that on this count our gentlemen ought to be found guilty of disorderly thinking and sentenced either to stop using the term "absolute" or to stop trying to explain it.

The second objection, the notion that a participle is essential to the ablative absolute, is clearly an idea carried over from the Greek genitive absolute, which does regularly involve a participle. But in Latin this idea leads to the absurdity of first describing the construction as if a participle were essential, then immediately saying that a noun or an adjective may be used *instead of* the participle. If the student has any notion of what participles are, or even if he doesn't, this indiscriminate and unexplained switching around can hardly fail to puzzle him. In extreme cases, the effort to deal with such phrases as "Cicerone consule," "me puero," "se vivo," and the like and still keep the idea of the participle as an essential component has led to the even wilder absurdity of explaining that in phrases of this type the present participle of *esse*, because it does not exist in classical Latin, has been "omitted," or is "understood." Just how one can "understand" the presence of a word which isn't even found in one's language, or how one can "omit" what does not exist, I fail to comprehend.

The proper starting-point, of course, for dealing with any construction in any language is to meet it on its own ground, in its native habitat, and observe it in action—in other words, to collect as many instances of it as one can, or at least enough to provide a reasonable certainty that all of its varieties and capabilities are represented. Then, by comparing one occurrence with another, one can arrive at a sound idea of the forms which the construction may take and how it functions in regard to the *meaning* which it conveys, and can formulate a description of it which will not only say what it is but also set it apart from the

things which it is not. In this way my objections will be met.

The curious thing in this whole business of the ablative absolute is that all the essential facts have been available and understood for decades (at least since Stolz-Schmalz's *La-*

## A CHRISTMAS HYMN

BY AN UNKNOWN WRITER  
OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Deus Pater Filium—  
O natale gaudium!—  
Deus Pater Filium  
Proprium donavit.  
O natale gaudium!  
Dominus regnavit.

Habet vaticinium—  
O natale gaudium!—  
Habet vaticinium  
Suum psalmus David.  
O natale gaudium!  
Dominus regnavit.

Ecce sicut lilium—  
O natale gaudium!—  
Ecce sicut lilium  
Iustus germinavit.  
O natale gaudium!  
Dominus regnavit.

*teinische Grammatik*, 4th ed., 1910, pp. 388-390); they simply have not been used. If we put together the useful parts of the statements from Bennett and others whom I have cited, we find that formally this construction may be described very simply as "a phrase in the ablative case consisting of one or more nouns or pronouns accompanied by another noun, an adjective, or a participle," and that functionally it reports some circumstance under which the situation or events mentioned in the rest of the sentence occur. It may summarize a whole series of events ("his rebus factis"), or pick out one for special mention ("centurione duce"). What it never does is to *specify* the exact *logical* relationships between this circumstance and the other ideas present in the sentence. The logical connection is left entirely to the hearer's (or reader's) knowledge of the whole situation, so that the ablative phrase, while stating only that the circumstances mentioned were concomitants of the events presented in the major clause, may in thought be the equivalent of a temporal, causal, concessive, or conditional clause.

By now it should begin to be apparent that there really *is* no such thing as the ablative absolute in the

sense in which grammars and textbooks have heretofore attempted to define it, and that the unsatisfactory nature of their descriptions results from the fact that they are trying to grapple with a will-o'-the-wisp. Students find it hard to recognize and deal with for the same reason. But this is not to deny that a real construction of some sort exists; we have just been trying to work out an approach to an adequate statement of its forms and meanings.

It would be well, too, to devise a better name for the construction; and here also we have been anticipated. If we forget the meaningless term "ablative absolute" and look for something more informative, such as "ablative of accompanying circumstance," we find that Bennett in fact recognizes such a construction, though Allen and Greenough do not. Bennett distinguishes it (he calls it "attendant circumstance") from the ablative absolute; but a collection of examples will show that the two are the same. Bennett's examples of attendant circumstance (*Latin Grammar*, sec. 221) include "bonis auspiciis" and "nulla est altercatio clamoribus unquam habita maioribus"; but observe that "bonis auspiciis profecti sunt" differs in no respect whatever from "rege vivo profecti sunt" or "Caesare duce profecti sunt" or "impedimentis relictis profecti sunt." Similarly, "clamoribus maioribus," rendered by Bennett as "under circumstances of greater applause," is equivalent in both form and function to such phrases as "tot hominibus clamantibus," "multitudine praesente," "tam honesto iudice," "Cicerone iudice," "maximis clamoribus sublati," and the like. Cicero (*Ep. ad Atticum* i, 16) supplies some very instructive material. In section 3 we find "reiectio facta est clamoribus maximis"; in 4, "incredibilis est severitas, nulla varietate sententiarum"; and in 5, "summo discessu bonorum, pleno foro servorum, XXV indices ita fortes tamen fuerunt ut summo proposito periculo vel perire maluerint quam perdere omnia." It is self-evident, I believe, that in these three sentences "clamoribus maximis," "nulla varietate," "summo discessu," "pleno foro," and "summo proposito periculo" all have the same formal pattern and that each serves to designate one circumstance under which the events narrated took place. Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely; these alone are enough to demonstrate that there is no difference in meaning or construction between the ablative "absolute" and the ablative of accompanying (or at-



## THE CLASSICAL OUTLOOK

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tendant) circumstance. We Latinists ought therefore to abandon the designation "absolute" in favor of the more descriptive term.

This affair of the ablative absolute will serve, I hope, to illustrate some of the possibilities, and likewise the necessity, of a fresh, unprejudiced approach to Latin syntax. Many teachers, I fear, assume that everything has been done in Latin grammar and syntax and that all that is left for us to do is to accept and learn the truths discovered and handed on by the great pioneers. But experience proves that this is not true. Bennett, Hale, Lindsay, and others did great work a half-century or so ago; but many things change in fifty years' time, including people's understanding of Latin. I believe firmly that there is a chance for a rebirth of Latin studies in this country; but if it is to come, I believe it must come through honest concentration on the one sufficient, direct reason for learning Latin—the ability to read Latin literature. This ability will not be acquired by slipshod methods or tricky short cuts; but it should not be smothered by declining and conjugating and memorizing "rules," or side-tracked in favor of reciting translations. The meaning, the style, and the fun are in the Latin; and it is my hope that a more independent and rational approach to the necessary grammar and syntax will contribute materially both to our understanding of Latin literature and to our pleasure in it.



## GIVE THE OUTLOOK

If you have a friend who is a teacher or a lover of the classics, why not give him a subscription to THE CLASSICAL OUTLOOK for Christmas? Send in your order at once, and

we shall notify the recipient before Christmas, on a Latin Christmas card. Address the American Classical League, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

## NOTES AND NOTICES

The eighty-fifth annual meeting of the American Philological Association, in conjunction with the fifty-fifth general meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, will be held at the Hotel New Yorker, in New York City, on December 28, 29, and 30, 1953. Three panel discussions will be scheduled, one of which will be a joint endeavor of the two societies. There will be a meeting of the Council of the American Classical League in connection with the gathering.

The American Academy in Rome announces that applications for its Rome Prize Fellowships for 1954-55 must be in the New York office (101 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.) before January 1, 1954. Research fellowships in classical studies and art history carry a stipend of \$2500 a year and residence at the Academy; other fellowships carry a stipend of \$1250 a year plus allowances. Further information may be obtained from the Executive Secretary, at the New York address.

Twelve Fulbright grants are available to American teachers of the classics and ancient history for summer study at the American Academy in Rome. Applications must be submitted before January 31, 1954. Application blanks and further information may be secured from the Division of International Education, Office of Education, Federal Security Agency, Washington 25, D. C.

## LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

## CHRISTMAS NOTES

Mrs. Pauline E. Burton, of the Libbey High School, Toledo, Ohio, writes:

"For the second time, the Junior Classical League won first prize for the best Christmas decorations in our school. In addition to fir and holly wreaths, large images of Santa Claus, and 'Merry Christmas' in glitter letters, we used big 'snow men' with red neckties on which were the letters JCL in black."

A correspondent from the Henderson (Texas) High School informs us that members of the community often give Christmas gifts to the Latin Department and the Latin Club. Last year one gift was a real Roman lamp, the top of which bears an impression of two gladiators in full array, and, around them, symbols used on sundials. The lamp actually burns oil, and it adds much to the decor and general Roman air of the classroom. Earlier gifts were copies of *Confessors of the Name*, a novel by Gladys Schmitt, laid in the Rome of the Emperor Decius; an edition of Ovid dated 1835; and a Latin grammar also published in 1835.

## AGAIN THE GEESSE

Several readers, among them our own Secretary-Treasurer, Professor Henry C. Montgomery, have sent us the clipping from *This Week Magazine* of August 2, 1953, about the geese now being used in Malaya to give warning of Communist intruders. Classicists will recall how the cackling of geese once saved Rome from invaders. See THE CLASSICAL OUTLOOK for last May (XXX, 79).

## LETTERS FROM FAR AWAY

From Holland, Professor Dorothy Keur, of Hunter College, writes:

"Signs in the streets of Leiden, especially for the students, read: 'Cubicula locanda.'"

From Pago Pago, American Samoa, Mr. M. J. Senter writes for a sample copy of THE CLASSICAL OUTLOOK.

From the Escola Americana of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Mrs. J. Stekly writes to tell us that one of her students has translated *The Daffodils* of Wordsworth into Latin.

From Roosevelt High School, Honolulu, Hawaii, Miss Alice Carlson sends an account of a Roman banquet. A feature of the affair was the presence of several parents of students as guests. Parents as well as students appeared in Roman costume,

and wore wreaths of roses. Among the guests was an Air Force Brigadier General. The dining hall was decorated with murals of events in Roman history—the crossing of the Rubicon by Caesar, Caesar's capture by pirates, Caesar's Tenth Legion battling the Gauls, and Hannibal's elephants crossing the Alps. The murals were designed and painted by students. The lists of students participating are very interesting, with highly American given names and Oriental surnames predominating.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Professor Arthur M. Young, of the University of Pittsburgh, writes as follows:

"Our Robert S. Marshall Memorial Fund for Classics has enabled us to award scholarships totaling \$3225 this academic year. Six scholarships have been awarded to incoming freshmen, five to seniors, one to a sophomore, and one to an advanced freshman. One graduate scholarship was also awarded."

## AN HONORARY DEGREE

Mr. Goodwin B. Beach, of Hartford, Conn., was honored recently with the degree of Doctor of Letters by Leeds University, in England. The degree was presented by the Princess Royal. A portion of Mr. Beach's letter describing his trip follows:

"Nocte Glasgae exacta, Ledesiam profecti sumus. Hospitio mirifico excepti sumus. Ampla dormitoria et eleganter instructa nobis assignata sunt. Omnes et quidem omnes homines cultissimi sese erga nos benevolentissimos praebebant. Hac prima nocte Vice-Cancellarius cum uxore sua omnis sodalis accepit. Ille vir comis et voltu hilari est qui philosophiae Platonis studiosus postea acroasin de hac praeclaram fecit. Is cum uxore in aula grandi marmoreaque quae suppellectili decente instructa est nos manebant. Nomenclator adeuntis excepit et voce sonora nomina pronuntiavit. Exinde illos adiimus qui nos benignissime salutarunt. In extrema aula edulia mensas complebant. Postridie Vice-Cancellario societatem alloquente consessui praesedi, quo tempore salutationes Societatum Americanarum Latine recitavi.

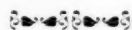
"Postridie pomeridiano a Principe Urbico uxoreque in Aedificio Municipali hospitio magnifico et apparatu eleganti accepti sumus. Inde ad caerimonias ubi nos ad gradum Litterarum Doctoris admissuri erant properandum fuit. His caerimoniis nihil unquam splendidius vel maiore gravitate actum vidi. Primi in aulam ingressi sunt Senatus, Decani,

Concilium, deinde Principessa Regia, togam viridem et auro picturam induta, puero a syrma insequente et lictore qui baculum gerebat praecedente. Denique nos graduandi cum introductoribus togis coccineis, introrsus serico viridi obductis induti incessimus. Illi in podio stantes manserunt quoad eo ascenderemus. Principessa tunc congregatos allocuta est. Exinde de rebus nostris gestis quantum colligere introductor potuerat recitavit. Eo dicente me Societatem Philologicam versiculis Latinis oblectasse, tum primum Principessa limis me contuita oculis subrisit. Citatione facta, Principessae petasati appropinquavimus quae dextris copulatis nos ad gradum admisit.

"Caerimoniis peractis, assidentes cum ea theam bibimus. Denique abitura ad Editham salutandam et Penelopae commorationem in Calendonia felicem optandam rediit, mulier profecto gratiosissima atque habitu regali.

"Conventu habito cui proptet iucunditatem et amicitias hominum cultissimorum conciliatas interfuisse maxime iuvat, Penelope quacum iter fecisse suave fuit quamque inviti dimisimus ad oppidum Sancti Andree rediit. Inde nos quoque postridie ad vicum Bolton Lancastrensi profecti sumus ut apud amicos biduum ageremus. Commoratio fuit iucundissima. Ei nos denique ad navem qua ad Canadam traiceremus automobili advexere.

"Vale, Anglia, Patria Maiorum, cuius oras haud lubenti animo relinquimus!"



## FELICES TER ET AMPLIUS

BY VAN L. JOHNSON  
Tufts College

**L**ATIN TEACHERS throughout the country will take heart from the spirited encouragement given to classical endeavors by the nation's oldest newspaper. On September 20 *The Hartford Courant* announced its sponsorship of the Junior Classical League in the state of Connecticut. In addition, Mr. James F. Looby, Education Editor of the *Courant*, has agreed to serve as temporary chairman of the JCL in Connecticut. Mr. Looby's devotion to the classics and his special interest in the JCL are well known to students and teachers who have heard him address classical meetings in New England and Ohio. To assist him in this commendable effort to organize and strengthen the JCL in Connecticut, the *Courant* has named an Advisory Board of about twenty classical teachers, editors,

school administrators, and other *fautores veterum*.

With expeditious enthusiasm the members of this Board met for dinner as guests of the *Courant* at the Hotel Bond in Hartford on September 28. *O noctes cenaeque deum!* At this meeting Mrs. Martha Eddy of Enfield High School, Thompsonville, Conn., was named chairman of the group; Dr. Robert H. Mahoney, assistant supervisor of the Hartford schools, graciously offered facilities for a state convention of the JCL; and the Reverend Robert W. Doyle, S.J., diocesan director of Catholic schools in Connecticut, promised the wholehearted cooperation of schools within its jurisdiction. It was the privilege of this writer—*nunc agilis fio*—to bring greetings from the American Classical League, to share the *Courant's* magnificent hospitality, and to congratulate its Editors upon their unprecedented move to foster Latin in the schools. Telegrams from Miss Estella Kyne, the chairman of our national JCL committee, and from Dan Myers, President of the Texas State JCL, were received with due appreciation. In a lively and useful discussion plans were laid for founding new JCL chapters in Connecticut, and for organizing a state federation next spring.

Inspired by this vigorous and well-guided activity in Connecticut, classical teachers in the other New England states are now making similar plans, in the hope that preliminary arrangements for a regional JCL meeting can be made at the next meeting of the Classical Association of New England, April 2-3, 1954, at Bowdoin College. Latin teachers interested in this enterprise are urged to write Miss Frances T. Nejako, 24 Burr Ave., Middletown, Conn. Miss Nejako has kindly consented to help with this more extended effort.



## WANT A TEACHING POSITION?

The American Classical League maintains a very inexpensive Teacher Placement Service for teachers of Latin or Greek in school or college. For details of the plan see *THE CLASSICAL OUTLOOK* for October, 1952 (page 4) or address The American Classical League Service Bureau, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.



Plan now to attend the Seventh Annual Latin Institute of the American Classical League at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, June 17, 18, and 19, 1954. You'll enjoy it!



## A FORMER PRESIDENT'S VIEWS ON ANTIQUITY

By JOHN F. REILLY

Sacred Heart High School, Yonkers, N. Y.

THE PERSONAL diaries, private letters, and papers of former president Harry S. Truman, along with conversations with William Hillman, provide some material of interest both for the classicist and for the teacher of history. Selections from them have been collected, edited, and published under the title *Mr. President* (Ferrar, Straus and Young, 1952).

The allusions to antiquity in this volume fall under three broad classifications: (1) judgments on the greatness of men in ancient times; (2) historical parallels; and (3) literature.

Mr. Truman expresses a profound and sincere admiration for the civilizations of Greece and Rome. The editor, who examined all the former president's papers and diaries, declares their theme to be the desire that the American republic not go the way of Greece and Rome. Truman estimates that the world regressed a thousand years when Roman civilization fell.

The former chief executive, whose knowledge of history is widely respected, sees little real change in the problems of government since the time of the Greeks and Romans. The important differences between ancient and contemporary times are to be found in two facts. First, the sovereignty now rests with all the people. Second, the masses are now better informed on the meaning and purpose of government.

Several ancient names, especially those of Darius, Alexander, Hannibal, and Caesar, occur repeatedly, especially in the interviews with Mr. Hillman. In Truman's judgment, several of the greatest men of all times lived in antiquity. It is interesting to note from what fields these men come. The nation's former leader uses the word "great" in an undefined sense, the meaning of which is at times nebulous. Such is the case when he says that only six or eight Roman emperors were "great."

Darius was the greatest administrator in history, according to Mr. Truman, because he employed a method that is always workable. He both allowed the maximal expression of popular voice and, at the same time, saw that his was the governing hand. However, Darius was not a successful leader in Truman's judgment because he, like Hitler and Napoleon, tried to invade the Russian steppes. Mr. Truman believes that conquest and ex-

tension over broad areas do not lead to success. In his opinion these ambitions caused the downfall of Alexander the Great and of Roman emperors.

Caesar is excluded from the list of great men because he was an imperialist and consequently a failure.

Hannibal is another of the former president's great men. He succeeded



## KNOW OF AN OPENING?

If you know of an opening for a teacher of Latin or Greek in school or college, please inform the American Classical League Service Bureau. For full information about this placement service, see THE CLASSICAL OUTLOOK for October, 1952, page 4.



against overwhelming odds without the support of the Carthaginian merchants, who were responsible for their own ruin. Since, in his opinion, the merchants' support might have been disastrous for Rome, Mr. Truman thinks the world might be better off because Hannibal did not receive their backing.

Truman has made a study of criticisms and attacks against his predecessors. He finds in Hannibal's problems parallels with American history. The Carthaginians lost the Second Punic War because he was denied the power to utilize his own initiative. Events similar to those that transpired in the Carthaginian senate occurred in our congresses in connection with Lincoln's call for volunteers against Southern secession, Cleveland's ultimatum to England on the Venezuelan dispute, Jefferson's attempts to do away with the activities of the Barbary Pirates, and Truman's own stand on the Atlantic Treaty.

Matters literary are not very prominent in *Mr. President*. Harry Truman admires Marcus Aurelius not only as a general but also as a thinker and a philosopher. He states that they have similar ideas on right and wrong. In his estimation, Demosthenes and Cicero are the world's outstanding orators. Mr. Truman read, in the company of Charles Ross, with whom he attended high school in Independence, many of Cicero's orations in the Latin. A publisher once told William Hillman that the style of the former president's speeches at times reminded him of Cicero's. Truman admits having tried

to imitate the great orator in vain. He characterizes the Roman's style as simple, straightforward, and factual, and sees two steps in his presentation: the statement of the case and its argumentation. If Truman were to cultivate a literary style, he would use Cicero for his model. Among the presidential papers and in Truman's own handwriting are two passages from Plutarch. The one, a translation by Giles Thornburgh, is on the retirement of Lucullus. The other, translated by Thomas Fuller, is from the *Life of Cicero*.

## BOOK NOTES

The Root of Europe—Studies in the Diffusion of Greek Culture. Edited by Michael Huxley. New York: Oxford University Press, 1952. Pp. xi plus 112. \$3.00.

The purpose of this book is to emphasize that not only the civilization of Western Europe, but that of Eastern Europe as well, is grounded in that of ancient Greece; and that Byzantium's cultural conquests are as significant as are those of Rome.

The volume is composed of a preface by the editor; ten essays written by specialists (all of them British except F. Dvornik); biographical notes on the writers; and a bibliography. The essays are entitled: "Greece—The Origins"; "Macedon and the East"; "Greece in Rome"; "Greece and the Early Mediaeval West"; "The Moslem Carriers"; "Byzantium and the High Middle Ages"; "The Renaissance"; "Byzantium and the East"; "Byzantium and the North"; and "Byzantine Influences in Russia."

The average reader will probably be particularly fascinated by those portions of the book dealing with Greek influence on the Islamic, Persian, Buddhist, Armenian, and Slavic cultures. However, the sections dealing with Western civilization are fresh and interesting also. Each essay is lavishly illustrated with beautiful photographs "varying in subject from Byzantine churches to Buddhist sculptures, from relics looted by Crusaders to processions in the Kremlin," from Anglo-Saxon crosses and Persian textiles to Moorish astrolabes, from Sicilian mosaics and a German reliquary to a Turkish mosque. There are seventeen specially drawn maps. The pages are large, with two columns of text on each. The paper is of excellent quality, and the printing is very good. (Why is it, by the way, that British publishers can afford to put out for the classical field sumptuous volumes such as this, the

very plan for which would send an American publisher into cold financial chills? Could not a small measure of "lend-lease in reverse" be worked out here for American authors?)

—L.B.L.

The Portable Gibbon: The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Edited, and with an Introduction, by Dero A. Saunders. Preface by Charles Alexander Robinson, Jr. ("The Viking Portable Library," No. 60). New York: Viking Press, 1952. Pp. x plus 691. \$2.50.

In this new period of digests and epitomes it is comforting to note that the Greek and Roman classics continue to find a market, even among the devotees of the comic book. Now the more discriminating reader who is still not up to former standards of leisure, endurance, or enthusiasm is presented with a "portable" *Decline and Fall* that may well lure him on to the complete six-volume work—"perhaps," as I learned in my college course in English literature, "the greatest history ever written in English."

If abbreviation there must be, this is a model. Consisting "of about 96 per cent Gibbon and 4 per cent Saunders" (p. 22), the volume is notable for intelligent selection of the Gibbon (interestingly for the classicist, it is from the first half, i.e., the narrative through the fall of the Western Empire, that the bulk—fifteen out of sixteen chapters—of the reproduction is taken, while the second half is represented merely by three extracts presenting the periods of Justinian, Mohammed, and the fall of Constantinople) as well as for the admirable summation of the parts omitted from the first half. In addition there is an excellent introduction of twenty-four pages, mainly devoted to the historian, but containing also a careful account of the editor's procedures.

The one serious objection is the almost total deletion of Gibbon's famous footnotes ("nearly one fourth of the original"—p. 23). On page 61, in footnote 3, Libanius is spelled "Libanus" (an error found as well in the Everyman and the Modern Library editions); on pages 129-130 (a summary by the editor) Septimius Severus is referred to as "Septimus"; and on page 213 "genius" is misspelled.

—K.G.



Miss Marguerite B. Grow, of the Hockaday School, Dallas, Texas, writes that her students' Latin banquet on February 12 will be in honor of Mercury. An art contest is being

held to get appropriate souvenirs, and a student will write an original play.

#### MATERIALS

An attractive booklet, *Two Latin Playlets*, by Sister Maria Thecla, S.C., Director of the Diocesan Latin Department of Pittsburgh, Pa., has just appeared. The two playlets, *Cui Nomen Erat Joannes* and *Donum Parvuli*, A Christmas Play, are written in liturgical Latin and include passages from the Vulgate and from well-known carols and hymns. There is a Latin-English vocabulary. The plays are simple, and easily staged, and could be used in public as well as parochial schools. Both use singing choirs. The booklet may be obtained for 45¢ from Catholic Language Workbooks, Inc., 191 Park Drive, Boston 15, Mass.

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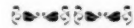
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Of the Classical Outlook, published 8 times yearly at Oxford, Ohio, for October 1, 1953, State of Ohio  
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ss Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared Henry C. Montgomery, who having been duly sworn according to law deposes and says that he is the Secretary-Treasurer of the American Classical League, publisher of The Classical Outlook and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in Section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse side of this form, to wit:

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Conditions for the study of classical antiquity in and about Rome were never more favorable. Apart from the fact that many improvements have been made since the war in the preservation and display of the pre-war archaeological material, opportunity is now given to visit such important new excavations as those in ancient Ostia. The Academy's fine collection of books on all aspects of classical antiquity is available to all students, and the cultural activities of the city as a whole (concerts, opera, art exhibitions, etc.) are flourishing. Suitable accommodations and board in Rome for the duration of the Session may be obtained through the Academy.

The course will be devoted to Roman civilization as exemplified in its surviving material remains in and around Rome and as portrayed in its literature. Emphasis will be placed on study of the monuments in situ and the objects preserved in museums. But they will be constantly connected in the instruction with Rome's literary

tradition and especially with the great authors of the late Republic and the Augustan Age: Cicero, Virgil, Horace and Livy. Lectures on other aspects of Roman culture will also be given in order to present a reasonably complete picture of the development of Roman civilization from the origins to Constantine. Excursions will be made to Monte Albano, Hadrian's Villa, Horace's Sabine Farm, Palestrina, Ostia, and one or more Etruscan sites.

Enrollment will be limited to twenty-two students. Applications for admission must be received by the Academy's New York office not later than March 1, 1954. Basic expenses including tuition, accommodations, board, and cabin class transportation from New York and return may be estimated at \$1,000. As in the past, holders of scholarships from regional classical associations will have the tuition fee of \$100 remitted.

Requests for details should be addressed to:

Miss Mary T. Williams,  
Executive Secretary  
American Academy in Rome  
101 Park Avenue  
New York 17, New York